

# Y.O.U.T.H. YOUNG OUTDOORSMEN UNDERSTANDING THE HUNTING HERITAGE



Harold Umber

**By Jeb Williams**

The North Dakota Game and Fish Department is initiating a new program that could aid young hunters in learning one of the more important lessons necessary for a lifetime of memorable hunting experiences: asking permission to hunt on private land.

Approaching a stranger and asking for permission to hunt at times makes even the most experienced hunters uncomfortable. For a young hunter, the situation can be downright intimidating.

The Department's new Young Outdoorsmen Understanding The Hunting Heritage is designed to help. Nationwide, the number of young hunters is declining. The Game and Fish Department believes that one way to reverse that trend, at least in North Dakota, is to give beginning hunters an advantage – to remove some of the obstacles that might make them quit before they really get started.

Over the past decade the Department has initiated special youth-only hunting seasons for waterfowl and deer. These seasons have been well received and encourage situations where youngsters receive constant attention from adult mentors.

During regular seasons, the outdoor experience is at times complex and competitive. Young hunters, who along with friends or family members have trouble finding a places to go, might become discouraged.

The YOUTH program doesn't guarantee anyone a place to hunt. However, it does give interested and concerned landowners a way of saying: "My land is posted, however, I am concerned about the younger generation of hunters and I may allow access with permission. I encourage you to stop and ask."

*A Cooperative Volunteer Program Between the  
Game and Fish Department and Private Landowners*

The main feature of the YOUTH program is a sticker that landowners can attach to “No Hunting” signs, as a way of communicating with young hunters. While a high percentage of landowners in North Dakota do allow hunting access with permission, a sign bearing a sticker may give young hunters further encouragement and confidence in building relationships.

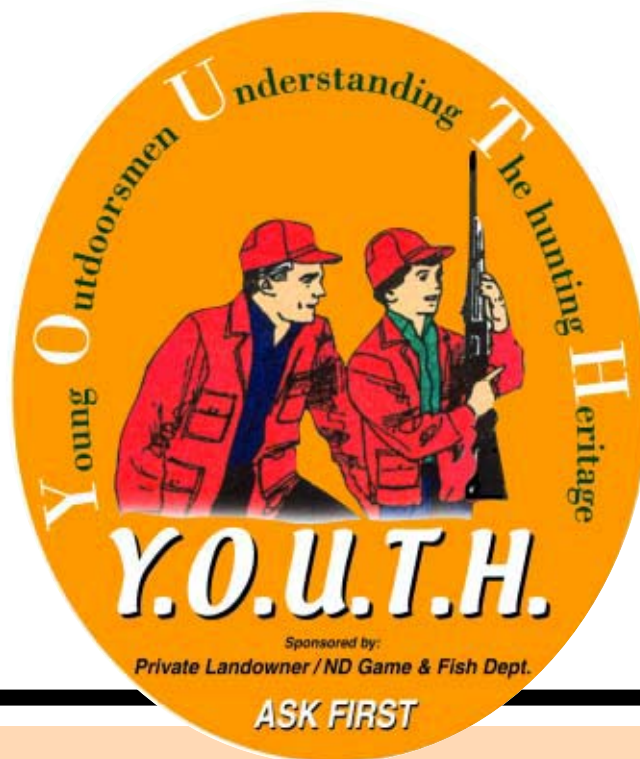
#### What this Program is NOT:

1. If a landowner places a YOUTH sticker on a no hunting sign, it is NOT a green light for young hunters to hunt their land. It is only a sticker sending a signal that “as a landowner, I do allow hunting access with permission, under certain circumstances. I encourage you to stop and ask.”

2. If a landowner places the sticker on his signs, it indicates a willingness to accommodate young hunters. However, certain situations will develop where a landowner may already have hunters, or may be busy doing farm or ranch work and would rather not have hunters at that time. It is our hope that a landowner would explain this situation and perhaps invite the hunting party back at a later date.

3. Hunters should not expect to pull into a yard with six adults and a teenager and expect the landowner to grant them access, just because the YOUTH sticker is displayed. This program is aimed at providing young hunters with a quality experience in the field, and teaching them respect for private land and landowners is a major part of our rich hunting heritage.

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### Questions and Answers

**Q.** What are the age requirements of this program?

**A.** *The Game and Fish Department will leave that up to the landowner. It is a landowner's decision whom they allow on their land.*

**Q.** Will the parent/companion be allowed to hunt with the young hunter?

**A.** *We are promoting a youth program; if the landowner feels the youth should be the only one carrying a gun, that is his or her decision. If the landowner feels comfortable with other hunters carrying firearms, that is also his decision.*

**Q.** My land is posted, but I do allow access with permission. Why should I put a sticker on my sign?

**A.** *The sticker will provide young hunters with encouragement in their quest for a good hunting experience and in developing relationships with people living on the land. This sticker should help landowners who are concerned about youth hunting opportunities and young hunters who feel they have no place to hunt.*

**Q.** I am a private landowner and I am interested in placing these stickers on my posted signs. How do I get these stickers?

**A.** *Contact the Game and Fish Department office nearest you and they will send you the free logo stickers in the mail. Or call the headquarters office in Bismarck at 328-6300; or send an e-mail to [ndgf@state.nd.us](mailto:ndgf@state.nd.us).*

The Game and Fish Department hopes the YOUTH program will be a timely tool to increase youth hunting activities and provide young hunters with the confidence they need in dealing with private landowners for years to come.